

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 9 and 12 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 1, 6, and 14, as follows:

1. **(Currently Amended)** An image forming apparatus comprising:

a plurality of movable image carriers, said image carriers bearing latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image from the latent images;

a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from said image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and

a contacting member separably contacting said intermediate transfer body at a contacting position for transforming the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to [[the]] a transfer material,

wherein an image carrier located most closely to the contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to the contacting position, constitutes a first image carrier where a position for transfer between said first image carrier and said intermediate transfer body constitutes a first transfer position,

wherein said image carrier located most closely to the contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on an upstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to the contacting position, constitutes a second image carrier where a position for transfer between said second image carrier and said intermediate transfer body constitutes a second transfer position,

wherein a toner image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred onto a transfer material after passing through the first transfer position and the second transfer position again,

wherein a relationship  $L_a - S_a \geq L_m$  is satisfied where a distance from the contacting position to the first transfer position along the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as  $L_a$ , where a distance from the exposing position on the first image carrier to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as  $S_a$ , and where an image length formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as  $L_m$ , and

wherein a latent image formation on said first image carrier is performed at a time different from a contacting operation of said contacting member.

2. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said contacting member comprises a means for transferring the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to the transfer material.

3. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said contacting member comprises a means for cleaning toner remaining after transfer of the toner image from the said intermediate transfer body to the transfer material.

4. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising another contacting member to contact with said intermediate transfer body, said contacting member contacting with said intermediate transfer body nearer to the

second transfer position than said another contacting member at a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body.

**5. (Canceled)**

**6. (Currently Amended)** An image forming apparatus comprising:

a plurality of movable image carriers, said image carriers bearing latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image from the latent images;

a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from said image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and

a contacting member separably contacting said intermediate transfer body at a contacting position for transferring the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to a transfer material,

wherein an image carrier located most closely to the contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to the contacting position, constitutes a first image carrier where a position for transfer between said first image carrier and said intermediate transfer body constitutes a first transfer position,

wherein said image carrier located most closely to the contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on an upstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to the contacting position,

constitutes a second image carrier where a position for transfer between said second image carrier and said intermediate transfer body constitutes a second transfer position,

wherein a toner image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred onto the transfer material after passing through the first transfer position and the second transfer position again,

wherein a relationship  $L_b + S_b \geq L_m$  is satisfied where a distance from the contacting position to the second transfer position along the moving route of said intermediate transfer body in a direction reverse to the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as  $L_b$ , where a distance from the exposing position on said second image carrier to the second transfer position along the move of said second image carrier is set as  $S_b$ , and where an image length formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as  $L_m$ , and

wherein a latent image formation on said second image carrier is performed at a time different from a contacting operation of said contacting member.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, wherein a relationship  $Lb + Sb + La - Sa > Lm$  is satisfied where a distance from the contacting position to the first transfer position along the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as  $La$ , and

wherein a distance from the exposing position on said first image carrier to the first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as  $Sa$ .

12. **(Canceled)**

13. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, wherein a relationship  $Lb + Sb + La - Sa < Lm$  is satisfied where a distance from the contacting position to the first transfer position along the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as  $La$ , and where a distance from the exposing position on said first image carrier to the first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as  $Sa$ , and

wherein a toner image formation position on the intermediate transfer body is moved on an upstream side with respect to the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body at each image formation where images are formed successively.

14. **(Currently Amended)** An image forming apparatus comprising:  
a plurality of movable image carriers, said image carriers bearing latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image from the latent images;

a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from said image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and

a contacting member separably contacting said intermediate transfer body, at a contact for transforming the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to a transfer material,

wherein an image carrier located on an upstream side of said contacting member in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body, among said plural image carriers, constitutes a first image carrier, whereas the image carrier located on a downstream side of said first image carrier in the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body, constitutes a second image carrier where a position for transfer between said first image carrier and said intermediate transfer body constitutes a first transfer position and where a position for transfer between said second image carrier and said intermediate transfer body constitutes a second transfer position,

wherein a toner image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred onto the transfer material after passing through the first transfer position and the second transfer position again,

wherein a relationship  $L_c + S_a - S_b \geq L_m$  is satisfied where a distance from said exposing position on said first image carrier to the first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as  $S_a$ , where a distance from the exposing position on said second image carrier to the second transfer position along the moving direction of said second image carrier is set as  $S_b$ , where a distance from the first transfer position to the second transfer position along the moving direction of the intermediate

transfer body is set as  $L_c$ , and where an image length formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as  $L_m$ , and

wherein a latent image formation on said first image carrier, a latent image formation on said second image carrier, and a contacting operation of said contacting member are performed at times different from each other.

15. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said contacting member includes a means for transferring the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to the transfer material.

16. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said contacting member includes a means for cleaning toner remaining after transfer of the toner image from the said intermediate transfer body to the transfer material.

17. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the contacting operation of said contacting member is done after forming a latent image on the first image carrier and before forming a latent image on the second image carrier.

18. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, the image length  $L_m$  formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as a longest image which the image forming apparatus can form on the intermediate transfer body.

19. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, the image length  $L_m$  formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as a longest image which the image forming apparatus can form on the intermediate transfer body.

20. **(Previously Presented)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14, the image length  $L_m$  formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as a longest image which the image forming apparatus can form on the intermediate transfer body.